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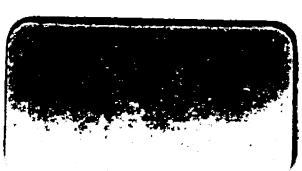

Constance

The last of the Calico Rooster.

LITTLE PITCHER STORIES.

CHARLEY'S CALICO ROOSTER.

BY

MRS. MAY.

BOSTON:
WM. H. HILL, JR., & CO.
1869.

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CHARLEY'S CALICO ROOSTER.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE BIG ELM.

THE Little Pitchers were all together under the shade of the big elm. The big elm was very, very old, and it had wide-spreading branches, thickly covered with green leaves, which rustled, when the wind stirred them, with a sound very pleasant to hear. The sun's rays could not penetrate this dense foliage, and so underneath the tree was a wide, circular space of shade, which the Little Pitchers liked very much. I do not mean pitchers of stone or earthenware, but those Little Pitchers with great ears of

whom you have so often heard. If I were speaking of boxes, I should say there was a nest of them, and there were four sizes. There was Flora, the baby pitcher, who nestled right in the heart of the nest, surrounded by all the other pitchers, who clustered lovingly about her. There was Bertie, a size larger, then came Charley, and last of all Amy, who was the biggest pitcher of the lot, and who kept all the others together, as the outside box holds the little ones. Pitcher number one, I suppose you would call her. She was endeavoring to soothe Flora, who seemed to be in great affliction.

"I have cried and cried," said the baby pitcher, shaking her shaggy mane, and stamping her foot, "and it don't do any good."

"I have not found out yet that crying ever did any good," said Charley, who never let slip an opportunity for teasing the little one.

"Now, Charley, you stop!" and Flora's black eyes snapped angrily.

"Yes, Charley, you stop," echoed Amy, "you know the little pet cannot speak very plain, and that she means she has tried and tried."

"Oh!" said Charley.

"Yes," said the little pet.

"Yes," chimed in Bertie, who always took the baby pitcher's part, "that is what she means, and Charley knows it as well as any of us, only he always will tease her. Here, pet, let me brush your hair off your pretty forehead."

And Flora, who had full confidence in Bertie, walked demurely to his side, and consented to have her hair brushed from her forehead, and secured under her tiny straw hat.

"Now, what is the matter?" inquired Bertie, feelingly, "what have you tried to do?"

"I cried to catch Charley's Calico Rooster," pouted Flora, "and he was just as cross!"

"Charley cross? Fie, Charley!"

"No, the rooster was just as cross. He runned away and — Oh, dear! I am so tired."

Amy took her little sister in her arms, and put down the pan of pease she was shelling. She wiped the baby pitcher's face, and fanned her with Charley's hat that lay upon the bench; for there was a bench, and it was placed around the trunk of the old elm, for the use of the Little Pitchers.

"Now tell sister all about it," said Amy, soothingly.

"It was Charley's fault," began Flora.

"It always is," said he, in an injured tone.

"Hush," said Bertie.

"It was Charley's fault, was it?" said Amy.

"Yes," said Flora. "I wanted some pretty feathers for my hat, and he promised to give

me some if I would run and get them, and I did, and then he wouldn't."

She raised her head from her sister's arm, and looked her steadily in the face. "I did, and then he wouldn't," she repeated, "and that's a story, Charley Waters, you have telled a story!"

"What a pity!" said Charley.

"Where does he keep the feathers?" inquired Amy.

"Why, I told you. In the Calico Rooster's tail."

"Ho, ho," laughed Charley, and Bertie and Amy laughed too, for they could not help it.

"I wanted a long red one,—I saw it sticking out,—and some little blue ones."

"You must not mind what Charley says, dear. He knew you could not catch the Calico Rooster. Nobody can. Not even Charley. He is very wild, you know."

"But I want the feathers," persisted Flora.

"Then you must wait for him to shed them."

"I can't, sister."

"But you must."

"I wish he was dead, and then I could have a whole bushel," she answered pettishly; and as the pile of pretty feathers rose high before her in imagination, she exclaimed, "Oh, I wish he was dead!"

"Horrible!" ejaculated Charley. "Don't you know it is wicked to wish anybody dead?"

"Roosters ain't anybody," said Bertie, hastily.

"But the Calico Rooster! Didn't you know it was wicked to wish the Calico Rooster dead?"

"'Taint!" said Flora.

"She only wants his fine coat," said Amy. "She would not harm the rooster."

"Don't you wish Grandma was dead, so

that you could have her fine clothes?" said Charley.

And then the little pet began to cry, for she did not want anybody to die, not even the Calico Rooster,— but Grandma! It was very cruel of Charley. But Charley was sorry in a moment, he did not mean to wound the little pet's feelings, and he tried to kiss her and tell her how sorry he was. But Flora was crying as though her heart were breaking, and she would have nothing to say to Charley, and she would not kiss and make up. After a while she stopped crying, and then she lay in her sister's arms very quietly.

"Is she aslcep?" queried Charley.

"No," said Amy.

"I tell you what it is," he said, winking at Bertie, "I know where there is a peacock."

Bertie looked as if he doubted it.

"Did you ever see a peacock?"

"No," said Bertie.

"Well, I have, and it had splendid feathers! All blue and gold, and covered with eyes!"

"I don't believe it," said Bertie.

"It is a fact, and I know where I can get some."

"Eyes, too?"

"Yes, eyes, too."

"How many eyes does a peacock have?"

"Thousands!" said Charley, "one to every feather."

"Pooh! if you had said a dozen I might believe you; spiders have as many as that."

"Not that kind."

"Oh," said Bertie.

"No, indeed. The feathers have beautiful round spots on them, that is what they call eyes."

"Oh," said Bertie, again.

"Yes, and I know a boy that has got some

to sell. He wants me to buy them. The Calico Rooster's tail is nothing to a peacock's! Oh, no, I guess not."

All the time Charley was talking he watched Flora, who tried very hard not to hear what he was saying; but she could not help feeling interested in the blue and gold feathers covered with such beautiful round spots.

"Would they make a nice chimney?" she asked, when she could appear indifferent no longer.

"They would make a bully chimney," said Charley, "smoke and all."

"Oh, how I would like to have one!"

"You shall have one. If you will kiss and make up, I will buy you a smasher!"

So Flora kissed and made up, and then Charley examined his pockets to see if he could find money enough to buy the feather immediately, but upon taking account of stock

he found not a penny that he could call his own.

"That is too bad," he said. He was really disappointed. "I thought I had ten cents left. What did I do with it?"

"You never had any money," said Amy, "I never saw such a boy."

"I shall have some to-morrow, anyway, for Grandma owes me for two dozen eggs, and to-morrow is pay-day. Can you wait until to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Flora, graciously. "Tell me about the eyes."

So Charley told her about the eyes and about the great fan the peacock made with his pretty feathers, and the baby pitcher forgot the Calico Rooster, and Charley's cruel words, and asked to sit on his knee; and Charley took her in his arms and allowed her to comb his hair with her fingers, and braid it in a row of little

tails all around his head, while Amy shelled the pease and Bertie helped her. And after the pease were shelled, Amy and Flora went into the house, and Charley and Bertie went home; for they were not brothers and sisters you must remember, but cousins; and Charley and Bertie lived in the new, brown house on the opposite corner. But there was seldom a day that the cousins did not see each other, and the four Little Pitchers were as one happy family.

CHAPTER II.

THE CALICO ROOSTER AND THE BLACK SPANISH GRANDEE.

CHARLEY'S Calico Rooster was an exile and a wanderer. He was a very handsome bird, with red and yellow and black feathers in his tail, and a ruff of yellow feathers about his neck. And his wings were so covered with mixed colors of various hues that Charley gave him the name Calico, because he reminded him of a piece of gay figured chintz. Charley was very fond of this rooster. He was the only surviving chicken of the black pullet's brood. You remember the black pullet in Bertie's Telegraph, that was driven from her nest by a clap of

thunder and never went back to it again? You remember, do you not, how Grandma hatched out the chicks in the oven, and that they were all roosters but one? That was when Charley first went into the hen business, and before he took Bertie into partnership. Charley was a mother to the orphans, and at first they bade fair to live and be an honor to him, but Charley could not brood them, for he had no wings with which to cover them, and whether they missed the brooding they never had known, or the black pullet's scratching and clucking, I cannot say, but they fell away one after another, the sister first and then her orphan brothers, until only the Calico Rooster was left to perpetuate his race. But the Calico Rooster, with all his fine feathers, was a failure. He had no back bone. I do not mean that he really was built without a frame-work, like a boned turkey. He had as good a skeleton as any other rooster,

could hold his head as high and crow as loud, and use his powers of locomotion. That is to say, he had legs, and could walk. But he was deficient in moral qualities. He was a coward; and when the Black Spanish Grandee, with a plume of invisible green, tried to win the affections of his many wives — for the Calico was a Mormon in faith and practice — and usurp his place in the harem, he feebly took to flight with hardly a show of resistance. And the hens, that had marched under his flag, deserted his colors at the critical moment, and rallied round the dark plume of the Spanish Grandee.

This was a cruel blow, and our rooster never recovered from it. He had been faithful to the interests of his large family. No one had ever known him to be selfish or greedy. The call to breakfast was always promptly answered, the head of the house was never guilty of keeping the table waiting, but he fasted until his many

wives were served, not eating a mouthful until the keen edge of their appetites was blunted, and then "falling to" with a readiness that showed off his gallantry in the strongest light. He always reserved for them the fattest worms and the choicest kernels of corn, and this was his reward. This was gratitude. He was not allowed to set foot within the limits of the hennery. He was insulted by his rival, who never let pass an opportunity to attack and disgrace him. He was slighted and scorned by his many wives; and he sorrowfully wandered through the wide, wide world, solitary and alone; taking his hermit meals whenever and wherever he could obtain them, sleeping with the birds of the air upon a limb of the nearest tree, where he could overlook the Paradise he might not enter. What his thoughts were no one could tell. He was low-spirited, that was plain to all, for he walked with drooping wings

and plumage, and his voice was no longer heard in the land. But his coat of many colors did not fade, and that was against him. His gaudy finery shut him off from human sympathy, and no one pitied him but Charley. Possibly, if he had been a dingy bird with dull, brown feathers, he might have fared better, but nobody could forgive him his brilliant attire.

Bertie sneeringly declared in his hearing, that "it is not fine feathers that make fine birds," and everybody had a fling at the Calico Rooster.

That is to say, everybody but Charley. He could not see that his favorite was demoralized, and said, what was true, that in a fair fight one only could be victorious, and that as the Black Spanish was larger, older and stronger than the Calico, he was bound to win; and for that reason Victory perched on his banner, and not on the gay flag of his favorite.

"Look at his spurs, not more than half grown!" said Charley, "what can you expect?"

But Bertie answered that if he had had the pluck, he could have conquered, spurs or no spurs, for he was on his own ground, while the other was in the enemy's country.

There was something in that, but Charley would not admit it. He attached very little weight to Bertie's assertions, because he was his younger brother. Sayings that he would have considered wise, coming from anybody else, were stupid when Bertie uttered them. He insisted that his favorite had been defeated in a fair fight, and was not to be scorned simply because he lacked physical strength. The Calico had a champion, but had not sense enough to know it. He could not separate friend from foe, and ran from Charley's helping hand as readily as from the torments of his enemies.

He skulked upon the borders of his once happy home, or trespassed upon the territory of his neighbors, and his gay plumage was everywhere a signal for warfare. No one spared the poor bird, and Flora esteemed it a privilege to chase him even from his own precincts. So neither at home nor abroad could he find peace, or a resting-place for the sole of his foot. I must confess that he was a nuisance, for sometimes, when the warm sun shone upon him, and revived his drooping spirits, he would forget for awhile his sufferings, and his solitary wanderings would lead him into forbidden paths, among the tender vegetables and choice flowers, where he made sad havoc.

Many a complaint had been entered against him by long-enduring victims, and many an imprecation followed the track of his ravages, and if he could have been captured he would have been brought home in disgrace more than

once. Charley expressed sorrow for the misdeeds of the Calico, and promised to shut him up — when he could catch him, which was all the satisfaction he could render, and secretly he rejoiced in the safety of his pet, for he could not bear that harm should befall him. Life and liberty he could insure him, and the pursuit of happiness, futile though it might be. He could not restore him to his lost position, but he would afford him all the comfort possible. Not a finger would he raise to bring him to punishment. It never occurred to Charley that the rooster might come to grief without his agency. His wild condition was a protection, but a stone well directed would check his flight, and once in the hands of those he had wronged there was no mercy for him, for in his own dealings he had not been merciful. Charley was selfish where the Calico was concerned; he made excuses for him when no possible excuse could

avail, and would have shielded him from the consequence of his folly at all hazards.

Unknown to him, the rooster had an enemy more dangerous than any he had yet encountered. Even the Black Spanish was harmless beside him, for the Black Spanish spared his life. This enemy sought it. His deadly hand was lifted against it. He was even now lying in wait for his victim, with untiring patience. If Charley had suspected it, he might have saved his favorite, but he was over confident. He had strong faith in the ability of the Calico to keep out of the reach of danger, and that any one could be heartless enough to destroy him, he never dreamed. But his career was about to receive a check. A choice bed of beets had been wantonly despoiled; the bare stems cried aloud for vengeance, and the doom of the Calico was sealed. There was murder in the heart of the outraged owner.

CHAPTER III.

AMY ENCOUNTERS A MISFORTUNE AND A FELLOW-SUFFERER.

IT is not a pleasant thing as you walk into your garden some fine morning, to find your choicest plants uprooted and lying in the path, to be scorched by the noonday sun. Yet this was Amy's experience, and Amy though a very gentle girl, had no more patience than many older persons possess; and when she found her pretty plants broken and wilted, and a deep hole right in the middle of her bed of verbenas, she sat down on the ground in the midst of the wreck and wept bitter tears of vexation. For the Calico Rooster

had been there, and he had had a jubilee. He had been sunning himself in the flower-bed, and trifles did not stand in his way. Where the red and white verbenas blossomed only yesterday, high mounds of black earth stood, and the rich loam was scattered in all directions. Amy could not help crying, and oh, how she hated the Vandal that had worked such destruction! How a glimpse of his gay coat would have enraged her then! It was lucky for the Calico that he kept it out of sight. I tremble at the thought of what might have happened, had he fallen into Amy's hands.

Poor Amy was discouraged. She had toiled in her garden day after day, and it had begun to smile upon her, and reward her for her labor. Every morning some fresh blossom surprised her into exclamations of wonder, and inspired her with new courage to fight the weeds, and carefully train her treasures. Every new shoot

she noted with pride and pleasure, and Uncle Barney, her father's old gardener, had looked in when passing and complimented her upon the thrifty appearance of her plants, and the neatness of her beds.

"It takes a posey like yourself to draw the pretty blossoms out of the mould," he said, "they would never smile for the likes of an old man like me."

And Amy cheered by the well-merited praise, went to work with fresh energy. She was determined that not a weed should show its face or a stone intrude. She tied up the straggling branches and propped up the slender stems; only yesterday she pinned down the runners of the creeping verbenas, and now — she could not look that way without a fresh outburst of tears. What had been the use of all her toil? What would be the use of trying to do anything while the Calico was at large to pillage

and destroy? It was a shame! Any decent rooster would have known better. But the Calico was not a decent rooster. He was a coward and a sneak, and must be brought to judgment. She would go to Grandma Lee, and see if something could not be done. Grandma always found a way to help the children out of their troubles. She could not bring back the bed of verbenas, but she might persuade Charley to give up the Calico. Charley was so foolish about him, and so blind to his faults, but Grandma could bring him to reason. Yes, she would go to Grandma.

She wiped her eyes and turned her head steadily away from the ruin. She could not trust herself to look upon it. The drying roots and the broken stalks appealed to her most tender feelings, mutely but eloquently. She rose from the path and brushed the loose earth from her garments. She had thrown

herself upon the ground without giving one thought to her fresh, white dress; and here was another trouble, the damp mould had stained it in many places. For a moment, her outraged flower-bed was forgotten, and the Calico had a respite. The soiled dress claimed all her attention. It was very careless of her not to remember that it was fresh that morning, and that her mother had charged her to be careful. How could she be so heedless as to sit down upon the dewy ground! It was not like prudent and care-taking Amy. But then she was not to blame. In trouble we are all forgetful of minor considerations, and the shock drove from her mind all remembrance of her mother's warning. She tried to rub out with her handkerchief the vile spots, but rubbing made them show the more, and she succeeded in polishing them to a degree of brilliancy they had not before possessed.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed in dismay, "what shall I do! It looks worse and worse!" The Calico was entirely forgotten now, he might have stalked over the dying flowers, she would not have seen him.

"I can never go to school in this plight, and what will mamma say? And how can I explain it? It was very silly of me to throw myself down in a pet. That is the way Flora does when anything crosses the grain. Oh, dear!"

She was about to drop upon the ground again, but checked the impulse, for a boy, barefooted and bareheaded, was coming towards her. Who could it be! He was a stranger, but his business was evidently with her, for he came towards her as one with a purpose. And his breath was quick and short. She could hear it before he reached her, and when he stopped he could not speak at once.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed in dismay, "What shall I do." p. 24.

"Is it yourself that owns the dunghill?" he demanded.

Amy did not understand the expression, and he explained.

"The cock with the shabby top-knot and the yellow quills."

"Oh!" said Amy, "you mean the Calico Rooster."

"I dun no what you call him. Is it yourself that he belongs to?"

Amy turned and pointed to her garden. "If I owned him I would hang him," she said.

A broad grin spread across the boy's face.

"Did he do that now?"

"Yes," said Amy.

"And where is he keeping himself?"

"I don't know. I wish I did."

"Oh! the pooty flowers. It is too bad!"

Amy wiped away a few tears that would start.

"I would like to make mince meat of his liver!" said the boy, and Amy heard unmoved a declaration so horrible.

"What has he done to you?" she asked.

"If you would be so good as to come with me, I can show ye," he answered, pointing to a small house not far distant. But Amy could not go with him, she would hear the story there.

"Well," he began, "it is about two weeks since the beets grew ragged and shabby, and it was as pooty a batch, miss, as ever you seen. I was watching of 'em close, for I minded that I'd catch an honest penny by 'em." (An honest penny, by the way, was something that very rarely found its way to the beet-owner's coffers, but of this he made no mention). "They was a growin' and a growin', and so was the cash I was to get from the sale of 'em. When they begins to pine, says I, 'some worm is a wriggling at the roots,' and I pulled one up; a fairer root

ye never seen, and nary a worm to trouble it from thriving. But the tops give the lie to the roots, and says I, 'some wermin is a nibbling of them,' but not a wermin could I discover. It was done in the morning early, you see, and I not up yet. Well, the tops grew despot shabby, till only the bare stems were left, and then I bethought myself to get up at dawn and watch for the finding out of the trouble, and the very first morning comed along the dunghill a-seeking his breakfast in my batch of beets. I let fly a stone at him but didn't crack him, and the very next day I tried it again. Along comed the dunghill the second time, a-seeking his breakfast where he had been a-stealing of it from his honest neighbors. And then my blood was up, — and I want the damage made over to me or I'll have the life of the beast."

He did not say that he would have the life of the beast at all events, but that was his in-

tention. His mind was fully made up to persecute the Calico Rooster to the bitter end.

"How much were the beets worth?" said Amy.

"Five dollars, miss, if they was worth a cent, but I will take a dollar and a half, and call it square."

Amy thought this a very generous reduction, and said so, but the beet-owner explained that he might not get anything if he demanded the full value of his property, and said he would rather throw himself on the mercy of Mr. Charley, — for Amy had told him the rooster belonged to Charley. Amy wondered where Charley would obtain so much money. A dollar and a half was more than his pocket-book could hold at one time, but she thought she would allow him to settle his own financial difficulties without her interference. She expressed her sympathy with the unlucky agri-

culturist and promised to use her influence in his behalf, and he departed quite at peace with Amy, whom he looked upon as a fellow-sufferer.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLEY RUNS AGAINST A DISAGREEABLE TRUTH.

AS the beet-owner disappeared, Charley entered the garden and approached Amy by another path. She did not see him, for her mind was absorbed by the late interview, and as her back was towards him, he walked all the way down the path without attracting her notice. As she did not see him, he thought it would be a good joke to steal upon her unawares, and startle her. So he crept along very cautiously until he was directly behind her, and then cried suddenly, — "Boo!"

Amy jumped and squealed.

"I thought I'd make you jump," he said, gleefully. "What were you doing, that you did not see me?"

"Nothing," said Amy, absently, for at the sight of Charley all her trouble returned, and the tears came into her eyes.

"You make yourself precious busy about nothing," was the rejoinder. He had not yet noticed the despoiled flower-bed, but he saw the tears, and the sight annoyed him. He thought his cousin very foolish and weak. To be sure, she was a girl, and that was some excuse for her, but it was so babyish to cry because he came upon her without warning. It was not like Amy at all. Of course he could not know that her emotion was caused not by his brusque salutation, but by the shortcomings of his favorite, and he did not stop to consider that Amy was a sensible girl, not easily put out by trifles. He jumped at a conclusion, forgetting entirely

her antecedents. He was a little vexed, so he said, somewhat sharply, — "I thought a body could say 'Boo,' even to a goose, but I find he can't;" and then, as he turned upon his heel, he saw the wilted verbenas lying in the path, and the big hole in the middle of Amy's garden, where the flowers had been. "I take it all back," he cried, impulsively, throwing his rough but kindly arms around her. "I didn't say it, and if I did, I didn't mean it," for he saw at once that Amy's tears did not flow on his account.

"Oh, Charley!" was all that she could say, but she melted utterly at his words, and rested her head against his. She was much taller than Charley, and could not lean upon his shoulder, but her light hair mingled with his black locks, and her tears dropped unseen upon them.

"I am a great ugly booby," said Charley, penitently, "and I always was;" and then

Amy smiled, and looked at Charley. He was such a bright-eyed, pretty little fellow. No one could have called him great, or ugly, or stupid. "I am the goose for poking fun at you," he declared, bitterly. "Being a boy, I ought to have some sense."

"You could not help it," said Amy, soothingly, "and how could you know?"

"I couldn't," said Charley.

"If I had been crying because you made me jump, I should be a goose, but I wasn't." Amy's voice trembled, as she touched upon the true cause of her grief. "It was so sudden, and such a disappointment! They were all flourishing so finely, and now,"—

Again Amy's voice trembled. There was something in her throat that obliged her to swallow before she could go on. "I had worked so hard, and then to come out here and

find this — Oh, dear! I am just like Flora, I wish he was dead!"

"Who?" inquired Charley, innocently.

The name of the offender had not been mentioned. It was funny, but Charley had not once thought of the Calico.

"Who?" repeated Amy, and as her voice rose, her wrath was kindled anew. "Who? Who does all the mischief? Who is the greatest nuisance that ever drew breath? If he would stop breathing for about ten minutes, I should be much obliged to him. Then I should know he could never go on again. He would be doing himself and us a very great favor."

"The Calico Rooster?" said Charley, rather faintly.

"Who else? There is not a hen in the village but that has better manners. I wish I was a hawk or an eagle, I'd gobble him up."

"I would not have believed it," said Charley.

"Why not? He cannot be depended upon, and you know it."

Charley did know it, but he was unwilling to admit the fact.

"Charley Waters! The case is getting desperate. Something must be done!" Amy spoke decidedly. She was in downright earnest.

Charley looked very sorrowful. His favorite was always disappointing him. Age did not improve him. Charley was compelled to acknowledge that his bad habits strengthened with his strength, and increase of years did not add to his stock of wisdom. He loved the Calico, but his confidence in his integrity was shaken. The case was getting desperate, and as Amy said, "something must be done." But what? The tie between them must not be rudely severed; Charley could never consent to the annihilation of his only surviving orphan. You

will remember that Charley called the chickens orphans, because they were deserted by the black pullet, their mother, and this was the only one left. There was but one way of putting an end to his depredations, and Charley shuddered as he thought of the knife.

"Cold?" queried Amy.

"No," said Charley.

"Then why do you shiver?"

"I was thinking sharp," said Charley.

"And to some purpose, I hope," returned Amy.

"Yes," said Charley, "I was thinking about the rooster."

"And what about him?"

Charley wanted to say he was considering the knife that was to cut off his head, but his courage failed him, and he answered faintly, — "I have not made up my mind." He could not bear to think of desperate measures in connec-

tion with the Calico. "Are you sure it was the Calico?" he asked.

Amy regarded him scornfully, and pointed to a few scattering yellow feathers, which he recognized. "You are backing down," she said, "but this is an outrage not to be overlooked."

How bright were the little lady's eyes, and how flushed her cheeks! Charley had never seen such a determined look upon her face, but the idea of a compromise had entered his head, and he desired to save his wayward favorite if possible.

"I will make you a new garden," he said, "with a border of daisies and heaps of verbenas, real bright ones, too."

Amy shook her head.

"With a prince's feather in the centre, and lots of Johnny-jump-ups all round."

Amy turned away her head.

"It is a shame, and I'm awful sorry," he

continued, "but if you will only forgive the Calico, I will turn all my eggs into the prettiest flowers you ever saw, I tell you! Shake hands on it, Amy."

But Amy would not shake hands. She had lost all patience. "I will not have a garden," she said. "I will never raise another flower while the Calico Rooster is above ground."

"Don't!" said Charley.

"I will hunt him and torment him whenever and wherever I can get a chance, and if you want to keep him out of harm's way, you will have to put him in a glass case and keep him on your own premises."

"Now, Amy, when you cool off," said Charley, patting her on the arm, "we will sit down on the bench and talk it over. Give the poor fellow a chance."

"Cool off!" she responded quickly; "one would think I was angry, to hear you talk."

"Well, aren't you?"

"No."

"Look out. If the pitcher cools off too suddenly it will burst."

"I will box your ears," said Amy.

"Box, but spare the Calico," returned Charley, dropping upon his knees, and lifting his folded hands pathetically. "'Woodman spare that tree, touch not a single bough,' &c.;" and Amy did box his ears with so much vigor that Charley lost his balance, and rolled in the dirt with the uprooted verbenas, and then she helped him up, and brushed off the loose mould, and they agreed to go to the big elm and hold a consultation in the shade, for Charley urged upon Amy the necessity of flavoring justice with mercy, and insisted that no one should lose his life without a hearing, not even an erring rooster.

CHAPTER V.

HE STUMBLES UPON JACK MIDNIGHT.

OW, let us talk the matter over calmly," said Charley, "but I think I ought to have the first say, because my property is at stake. I shall appeal to your mercy and superior judgment."

"Soft soap," said Amy, "is an article I never deal in."

"Nor I," returned Charley.

"I tell you what we will do," said Amy. "Hear both sides of the argument, and then submit the case to Grandma. She always knows what is for the best."

"So she does," said Charley. "She will

show us the right way out of our difficulties." Charley was generally the first one to say "Let us go to Grandma," but on this occasion he was somewhat backward in endorsing Amy's proposal. His conscience told him that she would decide against the rooster. With the Little Pitchers, Grandma Lee was an oracle. An oracle, you know, is a person who is noted for being very wise. Grandma Lee was such a person to the four Little Pitchers. Whenever they could not settle a dispute among themselves, they carried it to her, and she smoothed out the wrinkles, and turned discord into harmony. They always went to Grandma with their troubles, and it was not strange that Amy should think of her now.

"We will go back to the beginning," said Charley, "when the poor Calico was a little yellow bird, forsaken by his father and mother."

"And wasn't he a beauty," said Amy, for-

getting that she was to decry the rooster, not uphold him.

"Wasn't he!" echoed Charley.

"With his downy coat and round, black eyes!"

"That is not fair," said Charley.

"What is not fair?"

"You belong on the other side. You must not blow for the rooster."

"Who is?"

"You."

"No, sir. I am blowing for the yellow bird, that had such winning ways with him."

"I can't see it."

"Then you must be blind. He was not the least like a great, ugly rooster then."

"No, he was not, and he used to turn his pretty head so knowingly. Do you remember?"

"Yes, indeed," said Amy.

"And how daintily he used to pick up the bits of mud!"

"And how fastidious he was about his diet."

"Fastidious?"

"Yes, Charley."

"I never noticed that."

"He never would eat without first putting his feet in the dish."

"That's so," said Charley, laughing heartily at the recollection, "but it was the nature of him; chickens always do that."

"I wish he was a chicken now," sighed Amy, "broiled or otherwise."

"You would not eat him!"

"Wouldn't I?"

"I couldn't," said Charley. "It would be like eating my own flesh and blood. Haven't I been a mother to him all his life? I could not turn upon him now like a cannibal."

"I would not be so chicken-hearted," said

Amy, "if I were mother to a rooster. I would keep a stiff upper lip. If he belonged to me—"

"Pooh! You had better talk. Who blubbered like a baby when we found him beating his poor wings helplessly against the ground? And who wanted to choke the boy that threw the cruel stone? And who helped Charley make a nest for him in the basket and fed him out of her hand till he could walk again? And who dug worms for him, and took him out every fair morning for an airing, and stayed by him because he peeped so pitifully when he was left alone? And who cheated him with the feather duster when he pined for his mamma? Hey?"

"I wish I hadn't," said Amy.

"Oh!"

"I do."

"Take that back."

"I won't. I put the feather duster over

him to stop his noise; besides, he was a little wounded bird then, and you could not help nursing him."

"And you thought he was a pullet."

"So did you."

"Well, I do think it would have looked better in him to grow up a pullet. It would have seemed more like gratitude you know."

"His coming out a rooster was a piece with all the rest. No decent bird would have done it."

"He would have got along well enough if father had not brought home the Black Spanish."

"If, is a big word; there is no rubbing it out. Everybody would do well enough if nothing ever happened. If he had had a grain of spunk, he would never have been put down by the new rooster. It is no credit to any one to be good just because he cannot help it,

but to be downright malicious, as the Calico has been, is unpardonable."

"I think his heart is in the right place," said Charley.

"If I could have my way I'd soon find out."

"What would you do?"

"I know," she answered, darkly.

"What?"

"Something."

"You wouldn't turn round and dissect him, after helping to build him up!"

"Yes, I would."

"Why, Amy!"

"Charley Waters, it is of no use. My garden is worth more to me than your entire hennery. If you do not take the matter in hand, I shall, and if the old fellow is missing some day, you need not ask any questions."

"Amy!"

"I mean it."

"You would not be so cruel."

"Wouldn't I?" Amy looked as if she could be very cruel.

"I have always given you credit for bowels of compassion, and all that sort of thing."

"More soft soap. You may as well stop the supply, for I tell you it will not go down."

"Then I don't see what we are going to do, you will not listen to reason."

"I have not had an opportunity."

"How sarcastic we are!"

"It is the truth."

"I have been aiming a perfect torrent at your head for the last ten minutes."

"And didn't hit the target once."

"Come Amy, be clever, I want to make you an offer. If you will forgive the Calico, this once, only this once remember, I will do what I said about the Johnny-jump-ups and the daisies,

and keep the weeds out all summer. Come now, that is fair."

"What do you mean by forgiving him? Let him go scot free?"

"On probation," said Charley. "If he ever does so again, he forfeits his parole forever."

"And if I will not forgive him?"

"Well, then, we shall have to go to Grandma, I suppose."

"I shall go to Grandma at any rate."

"Shall you?"

"Yes," said Amy, decidedly.

Charley did not care to submit the case to Grandma, for he felt instinctively that it would go against him, and there was no appeal from her decision. There was no higher court.

"If it were his first offence," said Amy, "I might overlook it, but it is not. And if you have any authority over him you ought to shut him up."

"I haven't," said Charley.

"Then you ought to surrender him to somebody that has. How are you off for funds?"

"That's a funny question."

"I know it is, to put to you, but I have reasons, particular ones."

"Well," said Charley, pulling out his starved pocket-book, "the fact is, I am hard up; I wish the money market was easier."

"How much have you got?"

"Nothing worth speaking of."

"The exact amount."

"Well, to tell the truth, I haven't got a cent, Flora's feathers took my last red."

"I thought so. But you will be called upon for a deal of money before the week is out."

"What for?"

"Oh, to repair the Calico's damages, that is all."

Charley opened wide his eyes.

"You need not stare, I am in earnest. My garden is bad enough, but there is a beet-bed to answer for."

"Where?"

"Over yonder."

"Whose?"

"I don't know. A stranger's. He came to me this morning with a long complaint, and said he would settle for a dollar and a half."

"Whew!" said Charley.

"He caught the miscreant in the very act, so you have got to pay for it. He thought he belonged to me, you see, but I very soon informed him he had got the wrong house."

"Did you refer him to me?"

"I did, and he said he should be very happy to call on you and collect a dollar and a half."

"I wonder who it was."

Amy described the beet-owner, but not clearly enough for Charley to identify him, so Char-

ley put him down as an impostor, and said he would not pay a cent.

"Then he will take his pay in chicken," said Amy. And she explained to him how angry the boy was, and that he had threatened the life of the Calico, unless the money was forthcoming, and she casually mentioned that his breathing was labored and short.

"It was Jack Midnight!" exclaimed Charley, "I know him by the puffing and blowing. Those Midnights are an awful set!" and Charley looked very doleful. "I shall have to pay it if I can only raise the wind, but I don't believe the damage amounts to half the money."

"I guess it does," said Amy, "for he said five dollars would not make it square, but he wanted to be reasonable."

"Hum! I wish the Calico had gone anywhere else. I had rather deal with the old boy himself, than with Jack Midnight!"

"Why, Charley!"

"I had."

"That is almost as bad as swearing."

"I can't help it, and I don't care if it is worse," he answered recklessly.

CHAPTER VI.

AMY TAKES A BORROWED AND RECEIVED.

"THINKING of Jack Midnight makes you feel naughty, doesn't it? What kind of a boy is he?"

"Awful!" said Charley, "and he is trying to swindle me."

"Perhaps not."

"I am sure of it."

But Charley was wrong. The beet-bed was badly injured. Two dollars would not cover the damage. Jack had at first intended to demand more than that, but he was shrewd enough to know that if he placed the figure too high he could not recover anything, and his feelings were

somewhat softened by Amy's sympathy. He was a bad boy, but he was not without good impulses, and he named the lowest sum he could afford to take. To be sure, after he left Amy, he was angry with himself for not driving a better bargain, but it was then too late, and he intended to get even on the rooster.

Charley dreaded to have any words with a boy of his stamp, but he knew it was best to settle the difficulty as soon as possible, if he would not make a dangerous enemy, and for the first time his heart was hardened against the Calico, who had placed him in such a position. But for the Calico, he would never have had any dealings with such a boy as Jack Midnight.

The money must be paid, but where was it coming from? There was not much doing in eggs at present, for the hens, weary of competition, were taking a rest, and the proceeds of the last sale had been invested beyond recall. Amy

might loan it to him, she was always in funds, but he was ashamed to ask it of Amy, whose income was far below his own. Not for that reason was he ashamed, but he had not scrupled to call her a miser, because she did not waste her pennies upon trifles, but allowed them to accumulate until her purse presented quite a contrast to his in appearance. He had ridiculed her for always keeping a dollar-bill standing by, because when you change it, it melts so fast; and now he would give much for a remnant of Amy's prudence. If he had not spent the last week's income so foolishly, he could now pay his debts. Beyond Flora's feathers, he could not remember one thing that he had bought. By strict self-denial he might scrape together the needed amount by the end of another week, but he could not think of being indebted so long to Jack Midnight, and in the meantime, what might not happen to the Calico!

Amy knew what was passing in his mind, and smiled as she repeated to herself the many offensive names he had bestowed upon her. Miser, Miss Greedy, Madam Parsimony, and a score of others.

She was fully resolved to loan him the money when he should ask for it, but she was determined to subject him to the humiliation of asking, as a slight punishment for his many offences. So when Charley, after a long struggle, said very meekly, —

"Amy?" she answered quietly, —

"Well?"

"If you would not consider it cheeky, I should like" —

"Oh, no," said Amy, as he hesitated, "I shall not consider it at all cheeky. What is it?"

"I should like it very much if you would lend me money enough to settle with Jack Mid-

night," — speaking very rapidly, — "I would much rather have you for a creditor than him."

"Thank you for the compliment," said Amy, taking out her purse, "but how is your credit?"

"Not very good, I am afraid. I never returned the last quarter I borrowed of Grandma, but then, she never expects it."

"I do."

"Oh, certainly, and I will give you my word, that is as good as gold, and a great deal better than my bond."

"Do you promise to pay?"

"I will pay you the last of next week, as sure as I am alive." Charley's spirits rose at the prospect of a release from his embarrassment. "It is lucky I have you to fall back upon," he said, "for if I could not get an extension, I should have to fail up."

"This is not an extension, only Jack Mid-

night could grant you that. I should call this a timely loan."

"A friend in need, eh? A helping hand."

"Yes," said Amy, "but I ought to take security."

"All right. What will you have? A borrowed and received, or a lien on the rooster?"

Amy hesitated. "I might trust to your honor, but I suppose it would be more business-like to have a writing. If it is all down in black and white, there can be no mistake. I shouldn't like to lose my money."

"You shall have it in black and white, Amy. I will give you a borrowed and received. I would rather owe it to you all my life, than cheat you out of it."

"I think I'll not take a lien on the rooster, he is so slippery, but I'll tell you what we will do." Amy jumped up and clapped her hands. "We will ask Planchette."

"Agreed," said Charley, and into the house they went to consult the mystery. They touched the board lightly with the tips of their fingers, but Planchette forestalled their question, by asking, —

"Who is a goose?"

"There!" said Charley. "She knows everything."

"Is it Charley?"

"No."

"Who then?"

"Amy."

The word was plain to read, there was no mistaking it. Amy was a goose for lending her money to Charley.

"That is encouraging to begin with," said Charley, "and does not speak well for the security. You won't be guided by her, will you?"

"It depends upon the advice she gives," said Amy, roguishly.

"But she is a humbug. You know she is a humbug, don't you, Amy?"

"Do I, Planchette?"

"No," said Planchette.

"Now, tell me, shall I let him have the money?"

"Yes," was the ready answer.

"We will not be guided by Planchette, Charley, she advises me to be a goose."

"But I will pay, I promise to pay. Tell her, Planchette, that I will pay."

But she replied with great emphasis, —

"Never!" which answer so enraged Charley, that he called poor Planchette ugly names, and told her that she lied.

"I would not get so angry with a humbug," said Amy. "Ask her about the security. I must tie you hand and foot if you are such a doubtful customer."

Charley asked about the security.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters," was the reply.

"That means no security, doesn't it?"

"So I understand it. Does Planchette mean no security?"

"Yes."

Charley impatiently pushed aside the board, and said that Planchette was the goose. "Do you mean to take her advice?"

"I shall do as I think best," said Amy.

"There! I knew you wouldn't let me have it, and I am dead broke."

"I intend to let you have it, Charley, but you must promise to pay, and one thing beside."

"I will promise anything," declared Charley, recklessly, "and I will never call you Madam Parsimony again. I will give you a borrowed and received now."

"The promise, first, Charley."

"Oh, I agree to it."

"But I want you to be serious."

Charley drew his hand over his face and looked as solemn as a judge.

"We do not know what Grandma's decision will be."

Charley's face was genuinely sober now, he had forgotten they were to go to Grandma.

"I want you to promise to abide by it, and to conscientiously do everything in your power to bring the Calico to punishment."

"You want me to come the Spartan mother over him, eh?"

"If necessary, yes."

"I will do it, but I hope Grandma won't drop down on him too heavily."

Amy opened her purse and counted out the money, but Charley would not touch it, until the borrowed and received was drawn up. His experience in such matters was extremely lim-

ited, but after much careful writing and re-writing, he produced the following: —

I borrowed of my cousin Amy, 1 dollar and ½.
I received it.
I shall pay her next Saturday night.
Signed,
L. W. CHARLEY WATERS.

"Now for your spudabs."

Amy passed over the money, and took in exchange the bit of paper.

"Read it over, and see if it is all right," said Charley, who was somewhat proud of the result of his efforts.

"What does L. W. stand for?" queried Amy.

"Lord willing, I suppose; they always put it upon documents."

"Do they?"

"Yes, it makes it more binding, you know,

the same as 'hope to die, if I don't,' does a promise. I wanted to have it as strong as possible."

"It is a very strange idea, and one that I never heard of before."

"Then I guess you never saw many legal documents."

"No," said Amy. "Here is one now in this old paper, and here is the L —"

"What's the matter?"

"*This* one isn't W. it is S. — L. S." Amy bent over the paper. "Oh, yes, I know, Charley, "L. S., place of the seal."

"They generally put L. W. on," persisted Charley.

Amy went over the note again.

"Ought it not to be dated?" she asked.

"It is dated," said Charley.

"Where?"

Charley took the paper. "'Next Saturday

night.' What better date do you want than that?"

"While we are about it, I should like something a trifle more definite. Next Saturday night might answer for any week of the present century."

So Charley dated the note, and Amy took possession of it, and then they went over to Grandma's to decide the fate of the Calico Rooster.

CHAPTER VII.

GRANDMA SENTENCES THE ROOSTER.

T Grandma's they met Bertie and Flora. The latter was demurely seated in her little chair, holding tightly in her arms, Puss, completely enveloped in a woollen shawl. Only the wise face of the cat was visible.

"Hurrah!" cried Bertie, "I thought you two would come poking along."

"Don't flatter yourself," exclaimed Charley. "Grandma is the magnet; she draws equal to a sugar hogshead. Help yourself, Amy."

Charley's hand had already found its way into the fruit tray which Grandma had just

replenished. "These spice apples are the crowner, Grandma! How they do blush all the way through."

"I guess they are bashful," said Bertie.

"They are the first that come," said Grandma, "and young folks are always crazy after early apples. I can remember when your mother was no bigger than Flora, here, — how she used to wet her feet hunting in the long grass for them very apples, before the dew was off."

"Not these very identical ones, Grandma!"

Grandma shook her finger at Charley, called him a rogue, and making sure that the supply of fruit was equal to the demand, went on with her knitting which the entrance of the children interrupted.

"We have come on business," said Amy, after waiting in vain for Charley to stop munching. "It is a matter for you to dispose of."

Grandma pushed up her glasses, and rubbed her forehead. "The blessed dears! What has Grandma got to settle now?"

"It is a case of life and death this time," said Charley, taking another apple, "and I feel all cut up about it."

"You look so," said Bertie.

"It is no joke," declared Charley. "Many a light exterior covers an aching heart."

"Did you ever try peppermint?" queried Bertie. "I am sure it would suit your complaint exactly."

"Don't be silly because you were born so," retorted Charley. "What is Flora doing?"

"Making a martyr of Puss," said Grandma, "and it is astonishing how she bears it from the sweet pet, she wouldn't from anybody else."

"What makes you so dumb, Miss Pitcher?"

"Charley Waters, stop calling me Pitcher. My name is Flora Lee."

"Any relation to Rosa?"

Flora indignantly turned her back upon Charley.

"Oh, ho! Who likes peacocks' feathers with eyes to them?"

Flora wheeled about again, suddenly.

"I have not got any," said Charley, innocently. "I don't carry bribes round with me."

"Too bad," said Flora. "They are so pretty."

"Oh, very," responded Charley.

"Now if you have come to a period, we will proceed to business," said Amy.

Charley had paused in his raid upon the apples, and signified that he was ready to attend.

"You begin," he said. "Speak up, and do not mind me."

"Shall I?"

Charley nodded, for he had begun on another apple, by way of keeping his hand in.

"I cannot talk if you do not stop munching," she said; "you make such a noise, it sets my teeth on edge." She waited until Charley had finished the apple and then told her story.

"What a pity! What a pity!" exclaimed Grandma, when Amy got to the most pathetic part, where she found the bright verbenas with their roots drying in the sun. "Grandma can't have any such works."

But when Amy spoke of Jack Midnight and the beet-bed, she turned her kindly face towards Charley.

"Bless the darling! That cockerel will waste his substance in riotous living! Why don't he stay at home, and rest contented with his corn?"

"It is pretty rough, and that's a fact," said Charley.

"It will swallow up all the profits of the hen business," asserted Grandma.

'Not quite, though it requires pretty hard scratching to keep even with one chicken. The damages are a dollar and a half, Amy was so good as to lend it to me."

Grandma's hand went down into the depths of her generous pocket, and she proposed that the obligation be transferred to her; but Amy had full confidence in Charley's good intentions, and she felt that it was something to be the possessor of Charley's note. It was her first business transaction, and she felt that she carried in her purse a document of great importance. Grandma did not urge the matter. After Amy had told her story, Charley spoke a word in support of his client, but he had very little to offer. The defence was very weak. He felt it to be so before he began to speak, and was sure of it, after he had said everything that could be said, and Grandma asked if that was all?

"I am afraid it is," he answered, "but I would like to recommend the poor fellow to mercy."

"There is but one place for the offender," said Grandma, slowly, "but that place he can fill with credit to himself and satisfaction to others."

"Put him there!" interposed Charley. "Put him wherever he can be made useful. If he has to work his passage, so much the better. There is nothing like hard work, for taking the wildness out of a youngster! He has never been appreciated, because he never got into the right place. He has always been a square peg in a round hole."

"Stop, my dear," said Grandma, mildly. "The pot is the place for your cockerel. He will make a good stew, and eat tender if your mother only boils him long enough, but he will never be fit for anything else. I should say he would take about four hours."

"Oh, Grandma! Is that the best you can do for him?"

"The very best, my son; he has lived too long already."

Charley had given his word — which he had declared to be better than his bond — that he would abide by Grandma's decision, and aid in in its execution. That signified more than passive acquiescence. It meant that not only was he to do nothing to keep the Calico out of the pot, but that he must if necessary, lend a helping hand to throw him in. When he thought of the tender infancy of the poor orphan, his heart rebelled against such treatment, but when he considered Jack Midnight and the damages, the punishment seemed just, and he felt willing to give up the worker of so much mischief at once.

"Goody!" exclaimed Flora, when she comprehended the fate to which the Calico was

doomed. "I shall have bushels and bushels of feathers!"

"Hush, dear," whispered her sister; "it is Charley's rooster, you must not make him feel badly," and Flora released Puss from confinement and climbed upon Charley's knee, in memory of the peacock's feathers he had given her, and "with further lookings on."

"You like me when there is a prospect of making anything out of me, don't you?" said Charley.

"Yes," said the little pet; "very much."

"That is honest at all events."

"She belongs to an honest crowd," said Bertie. "There is not much deceit about any of our folks."

"It will be no fool of a job to catch the rooster, to begin with," said Charley. "He is dreadful slippery."

"So is an eel," said Bertie.

"Hush! Bert. I will do my best to keep the pot boiling, but honestly, I don't see how we are to catch him."

"We must all work," said Amy, "and Grandma will be on the lookout, won't you, Grandma?"

"Yes, dear. If I see him anywheres round about, I will blow the horn."

The horn had hung where Grandma's eyes could rest upon it, ever since the night of the fire, when Charley and Bertie were turned out of their comfortable beds, because the flames were so very greedy. If the horn had not roused them, the flames would have swallowed them with the beds. So Grandma kept it brightly polished, and never allowed it to be carried out of her sight.

"The horn would send him flying," said Bertie. "I could catch him easily enough."

"How?" queried Grandma.

"Bertie always knows so much," said Charley. "I can paddle my own canoe."

"All right," said Bertie.

But Grandma and Amy wanted to know how he would manage it, and finally Charley said,

"Let's have it, old fellow."

"I would shut up the Black Spanish and give the Calico a clear coast," said Bertie.

Charley saw at once that Bertie had hit upon the right plan.

"Get the new rooster out of the field, and the old one will soon find it out," he continued. "I should leave the door open every night, and watch the roost."

"That seems too much like a trap," said Charley. "Can't you think of some other way?"

"No seeming about it, that's just what it is."

"There can be no better way," said Grandma. "You can take him right off the roost, and dispatch him without the least trouble."

"And if you kill him when he is asleep, it will not hurt him half so much," said Bertie.

This plan was agreed upon, and Charley promised to find a cage for the Black Spanish as soon as he had settled with Jack Midnight.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARLEY RUBS OUT THE BEET-BED.

AMY went with Charley to settle for the beet-bed. He did not care to go alone, and as Amy had seen Jack, and was on friendly terms with him, he persuaded her to accompany him.

"I do not care to pay the money more than once," he said, "and I might be called upon a second time if I should go without a witness. I hope he won't be at home, though," he added, as they approached the tenement where Jack lived.

"Then we should have it all to do over

again," said Amy, "and that would not be pleasant."

"Not very, I expect," said Charley.

Jack was at home. The front door was open, and he was sitting on the step paring potatoes with the dingiest hands Amy had ever seen. She thought she would not care to dine with the Midnights that day. Everything about the place was dilapidated and shiftless. In fact, the Midnights were not desirable neighbors. A pig, and a brood of half grown chickens were waiting for the parings, and upon the step beside Jack sat a hungry-looking dog. When Charley saw the chickens, he gave Amy an expressive look, but he could not speak without being overheard. Jack began to whistle when he saw them coming, and kept on with his work. He evidently did not mean to speak first.

"Good morning," said Amy, pleasantly.

Jack returned the salutation, wiping the knife

upon his knee as he did so, and tossing it into the dish.

"We have come on business."

The pig, in his search for food, brushed by Amy so closely, that she involuntarily drew nearer Charley.

"He won't hurt you, Miss," said Jack, bestowing upon the beast a kick.

Amy answered that she was not afraid of him, but she did not want to soil her dress.

Jack glanced at his sleeves. "White is rather a catchy color," he said. "I find it so myself."

Amy did not wonder that he considered it a catchy color, if the sleeves had ever been white.

"This is the cousin I spoke to you about," she said, introducing Charley. "He has come to apologize for the rooster."

"I am very sorry my rooster should have troubled you," said Charley, with a glance at

the chickens, that did not escape Jack's notice.

"It shall not happen again."

"I guess not," retorted Jack. "I knew that before you told me."

Charley's observation of the chickens did not please Jack. He saw very plainly that he entertained suspicions concerning them not at all creditable to him.

"You look as if you wanted to say something," he remarked, insolently.

"No," said Charley.

"Maybe you think them chickens ain't honest."

"I don't think anything about it," said Charley.

"Let me catch you at it, that's all! And let me tell you before you begin, to keep a steady tongue in your head, and a steady eye, too. Honest folks are not to be suspicioned by

the likes of you. There ain't an honester thing about the whole place than them chickens."

"Except the pig."

"No, I won't except the pig. He will steal; them chickens won't."

"Oh, I do not doubt it," said Charley, and he spoke truly. "If you will name the amount that will satisfy you, I am ready to pay."

"Well," said Jack, "them chickens wasn't never in my beet-batch; they wouldn't touch a beet if it was under their very noses. They are well trained, they are, and they would scorn a mean action. So would I."

"I am glad to hear it," said Charley.

"She can tell you that I caught your dung-hill at it time and again. I told her so. And he pulled her garden all to pieces, too."

"That is nothing to you," retorted Charley, quickly, for he was losing patience.

"What's the reason 'taint? If I choose to

take her part, it ain't any of your business, nohow."

"You are very kind," said Amy, "but pray do not trouble yourself on my account. If you will tell my cousin how much he owes you, we will be going."

"Two dollars," said Jack, bluntly.

"What?"

"Two dollars."

Amy and Charley looked at each other.

"Cheap at that," continued Jack. "I won't take a cent less."

"You said a dollar and a half this morning," observed Amy.

"And now I say two dollars. Have you any objections?"

"Yes," said Charley, "I will not pay it."

"You won't, eh?"

"No."

"What's the reason you won't? Do you see

this?" doubling up his dingy fist, and holding it unpleasantly near Charley's nose.

Charley did not flinch. "Yes," he said, "I see it."

"And what do you think of it?"

"I think it is the dirtiest fist that ever I saw."

"You do, do you?"

"Yes."

"Maybe you'd like a closer acquaintance with it?"

"No, I should not, and I don't intend to have it, either."

"That will be as I say, pretty much," returned Jack, but he dropped his hand and his show of fight.

Charley turned to Amy, and said, —

"Come."

"You are not going?" observed Jack, hastily.

"Yes."

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"Without paying?"

"You refused to take the money. I have a witness here to prove that I offered you the amount agreed upon, and you refused it."

"It is mighty hard," whined Jack. "The beets are put back so that they won't be worth shucks in the market."

"I cannot help that," said Charley, walking off.

"Here!" cried Jack. "Split the difference, will ye?"

Charley kept on.

"Give us a dollar and a half, and we'll call it square."

"Do," urged Amy, — for Charley had no intention of going back. "Let us get rid of him as easily as possible."

To please Amy, Charley went back and offered Jack the money, which he accepted eagerly, without a "thank you," however.

"Maybe you would take a walk up and look at the beets, now."

"No," said Charley, "and you shall experience no further trouble from any of my fowls."

"I'll bet I won't!" answered Jack, with a grimace that Charley did not understand. "A dollar and a half is more than the dunghill's carcass is worth. How much should you say it would fetch now, dressed?"

They did not stop to answer his question, but walked off briskly, without looking back, so Jack's furious antics were lost upon them. So long as there was a prospect of their turning, he contrived to indulge in them for their special benefit; but when he found that his efforts were not appreciated, he took up his dish of potatoes, and went into the house.

"I don't care!" said Charley, when he could speak with safety, "it is my opinion that his own chickens riddled the beets."

"Perhaps he does not allow them in the garden," said Amy.

"He couldn't keep a sheep out with that rickety old fence, to say nothing of a chicken."

"Well, Charley, I would not mind. We are lucky to get rid of him on any terms. We shall never have to deal with him again."

"I don't mind, but I cannot bear to be swindled when I know it. I believe the Calico has got to suffer for a deed he never committed."

"Give him the benefit of a doubt, Charley, and remember that there is a long column to sum up, even if you rub out the beet-bed."

"The beet-bed is rubbed out. I shall never lay that up against him, and I wish I could rub out Jack Midnight as easily; but I cannot get him off my mind, and it stirs me all up inside to think about him. Wasn't he impudent, putting his dirty fist to my nose? Whew! I

would like to smash his nose all over his face!"

"Charley!"

"I felt just like it, but it would have been placing myself on an equality with him, and I could not do that!"

"I was afraid he would kill you."

"Pooh! I should like to see him do it."

"I should not."

"He durst not try it. Didn't you notice how he wilted when I looked at him? I tell you I understand looking a fellow down. There is a knack about it. It is a pity you are not a boy, so that I could show you how it is done. We cannot look that way at girls. If I do say it, Amy, looking a fellow down is one of my accomplishments."

"I am glad we are well out of it," said Amy, "and I hope never again to have anything to do with Jack Midnight."

CHAPTER IX.

BERTIE'S PLAN FAILS TO WORK.

IT took Charley nearly all the afternoon, to prepare a cage for the new rooster, and when it was fairly dark and the hens were all comfortably settled for the night, he broke in upon the little family party, and quietly removed the Black Spanish, leaving the door of the chicken-house open for the Calico.

"It goes against my conscience awfully!" he declared to Bertie, who assisted him. "It is setting the meanest kind of a trap for the poor fellow, and I hope he won't fall into it."

"He will," said Bertie, "you may bet your bottom dollar on that."

"My bottom dollar has gone up, and I am nine of Amy's shillings out beside."

"I should advise you to go through Chancery if that is your situation."

"I shall if the hen business does not revive, for I have promised to pay Amy next Saturday night. She has my borrowed and received."

"What's that?"

"Don't you know what a borrowed and received is?"

"No."

Charley entered into an elaborate explanation which Bertie sifted and reduced to a few words that told him all he desired to know.

"There is not much doing in eggs at present," said Bertie, "I don't see how you are to raise so much money by Saturday, for the hens

are all on the anxious seat. How many are doing the steady business now?"

"Only five."

"Five a day, and an extra one for Sunday will give us thirty-six by next Saturday night. Eggs are worth forty cents a dozen, now, and your share of the profits will be just sixty cents."

"You might throw in your share just for one week."

"That is cool, considering that the Calico Rooster is your own private property. He did not go into the partnership, you kept him out."

"I know I did. A man doesn't like to barter his own flesh and blood you know, but we shall fail up, if you do not put your hand to the plough."

"Your allowance will help along some."

"Twenty-five and sixty, are eighty-five."

"And I will lend you the balance."

"I think you might give it."

"I can't see it."

"Your share would just about make it, and the next week you need not divide, if all the hens lay every day."

"I will do that, of course, I didn't understand your drift. I thought you wanted me to dispense with a lavish hand."

"But if they all stop laying, the bargain holds good."

"I am willing to take the chances, and I shall make more out of it than you will. Push that slat down, and we have Mr. Biddy all safe. There you are; how do you like your new quarters, old fellow? Rather solitary, eh? Well, we all have to put up with some inconveniences in this world."

"He will experience some of the misery of a hen that wants to sit and can't be permitted," said Charley.

"Play you are a sitting hen, Mr. Biddy, and then you will be in your proper sphere."

The Black Spanish did not rebel much at this unusual proceeding. His senses were benumbed by sleep, and the darkness blinded him. He groped about for a few moments and then resigned himself to his situation.

"Have patience old fellow. Your rival will be as safely caged by another night as you are now."

But Bertie's prediction was not fulfilled. Strange to say his plan did not work. The hens, deprived of their leader, wandered about disconsolately, and the Black Spanish paced his dungeon like an imprisoned warrior, with downcast look and trailing plumes. The roosts were carefully watched, but no Calico appeared. Everybody was surprised, and everybody was interested in the capture. Grandma watched for his yellow feathers among her currant

bushes, and under the tall sun-flowers, and Flora, who expected to revel in the beauties of his coat of many colors, was a most patient worker until her interest began to flag. She sought him in all his accustomed haunts, but never once caught a glimpse of his flaming tail-feathers, the pride of her heart.

"I think he is real mean!" she exclaimed, in a moment of impatience.

"It is rather mean in him," said Bertie, "not to come home, if he knows what we want of him; but I guess he does not."

"Oh, dear!" said Flora, and started off in a new direction.

A week passed, and no one saw the Calico; two weeks — and Charley insisted that it would be downright cruelty to torture the Black Spanish any longer. So to the great joy of himself and his numerous family, the captive was set at liberty.

"I tell you what it is," said Grandma, "that cockerel has fallen among thieves."

The statement created a commotion in the breast of every Little Pitcher, and every one inquired,

"Do you think so?"

"I do," said Grandma. "I made up my mind to it a week ago."

"I am dreadful sorry!" asserted Charley. "If he has got to be boiled, I like to feel that the proper thing has been done. We must hunt him up, Bert."

"All right," said Bertie.

Many inquiries were made. Flora declared her intention of applying to her friend, Deacon Brown, for information.

"You don't think the deacon would steal a rooster!" exclaimed Charley, holding up his hands in horror.

"Course not!" said Flora. "He wouldn't

steal such a little thing! He wouldn't," she repeated in defiance of the laugh that followed.

"Why do you go to the deacon?" queried Amy. "He is not a proper person to apply to."

"Isn't he?"

"No, dear."

"He is acquainted with our rooster."

"I think not, Flora."

"He will find him just the same if I tell him I want the feathers. I will 'vise him to give it out next Sunday, and if any of the children have seen him, they can bring him in the afternoon."

"Bring the rooster to church!" exclaimed Charley. "Ho, ho!"

"Yes," said Flora, "same as they did my library book."

Amy explained to the baby pitcher that it would not be proper to announce a lost rooster

in Sunday School, as you would a book or a glove, and that Deacon Brown would be shocked at such a proposition. Uncle Barney would be a better person to go to.

"Does he know our rooster?"

"Yes, dear, almost as well as he knows us."

"We will appoint you a committee of one, to wait upon Uncle Barney, and report to the meeting," said Charley.

Flora glanced at Charley, but did not consider it best to pay any attention to him. She regarded everything he did and said, as directly opposed to her, so she would not ask an explanation of his words.

"He wants you to go to Uncle Barney, and inquire about the rooster," said Amy.

"Bertie too?"

"No, you can go alone."

"Dress up?"

"No."

"Wear my best hat?"

"Go just as you are, and hurry back. We shall want to hear what Uncle Barney said."

"I will," and off the baby pitcher went. She stopped every person she met to ask if they had seen Charley's rooster, and the question led to a description of the Calico, and, as she generally told the whole story, it was late when she got to Uncle Barney's. But Uncle Barney had not seen the rooster, and could render no assistance. He would keep him on his mind, he said, and that was the best that he could do.

"Wouldn't the little lady like to hear some music?"

Yes, the little lady would, and seated herself demurely to be entertained. Uncle Barney removed the green cover from his organ, and played all the tunes from, "Auld Lang Syne" to "Oh say can you see;" and then Flora told him he might play them over again if he pleased,

and to gratify the little pet, he went through the list again; and Flora thanked him, and said she must be going.

"Mind the stairs, little lady, as you go down," he said. "They be steep."

"I will, but you stand there and catch me if I fall."

So simple Uncle Barney stood as Flora directed, upon the landing at the head of the steep flight, until the little lady reached the bottom in safety, and then he returned to his pipe and his music. Flora started on the homeward track, her thoughts intent upon the rooster. She made a grand tour of inspection. Wherever she saw a family of hens, she made sure that the Calico was not a fellow boarder, and she accurately examined all the loose feathers that fell in her way. She had not given up her intention of applying to Deacon Brown, her confidential friend. Amy's advice

did not impress her very strongly. She was silenced by it, but not convinced. She secretly resolved to consult him concerning the rooster, the next time they walked down the broad aisle together. She could whisper, and Amy would never know, for she would 'vise the deacon not to tell.

CHAPTER X.

FLORA'S SURPRISE PARTY.

VER since the day of the blue boots and long feather, Deacon Brown and Flora had been fast friends. The long feather had been superseded by a black and white "pompon," and the blue boots had given place to tea color; but Flora's hold upon the affection of her venerable friend, had never relaxed, and he had come to regard her bright eyes and rosy cheeks as essential to his happiness. If he failed to meet the little lady at the door of her father's pew, he experienced a twinge of disappointment, and the sober, black glove missed the tiny hand that

was wont to clasp it tightly, as the two walked down the aisle and out of the church together. In the Sabbath School the deacon's kindly smile shone upon all the children; but one bright face appropriated his glance and returned it with a consciousness of being understood. Many were the secrets confided to his unwilling ear. Amy would have been horrified at the revelation he might have made. But the deacon was discreet, and Flora's secrets were safe. Would Amy have sewed that rip in her glove at the last moment before starting for church, if she had dreamed that Flora would report her to the deacon? And would she have dared to wear her scarf with the soiled part folded in?

Strange to say, the doings of the Calico had not been faithfully reported, partly on account of one stormy Sunday when Flora was detained at home, and partly because she always had so much to talk about, she never got so far

as the rooster. But now that she expected to become the proprietor of his gaudy coat, her interest in him was great. She found not a trace of him on her way home, and when she got to the street that led to the deacon's residence, she stopped and considered whether it would not be better to call upon her friend then instead of trusting to another Sunday. She was hungry, so she concluded that it would be better, and perhaps the deacon would offer her something nice to take. So she trotted down the cross street, turned the corner and mounted the steps to the deacon's door.

"Is Deacon Brown at home?" she inquired of the girl that opened it.

Yes, he was at home, and would the miss walk in?

Flora stepped into the hall, but declined to give her name. "You just tell him I want to see him," she said, "and that's enough."

"Does he expect you?"

"No, it is a surprise-party."

"But he is very busy. I don't like to disturb him."

"What is he doing?"

"He is at dinner. If you will send down your name, perhaps he will see you."

"He will. You just tell him it's me."

"But I don't know who you are."

"Don't? Why, I am committee on the rooster."

"Oh," returned the girl, smiling, "you are committee on the rooster, are you?"

"Yes," said Flora.

"I did not know that. If you will please to go into the parlor, and take a seat, I will tell Deacon Brown that you are here."

Flora walked into the parlor, which was very dark; so dark that she could not tell where the seats were. She had come in out of the bright

sunlight, and she groped about the big room very cautiously, feeling for a chair or sofa. Her eyes soon became accustomed to the change, and she found that there were comfortable seats all about her. She took one that was placed near a table, on which was scattered a variety of pretty ornaments, but she did not touch anything, she only used her eyes.

Deacon Brown did not keep her waiting long. He recognized the voice, which penetrated to the dining-room, and hastened up to learn the errand of his little friend.

She rose as he entered, and greeted him warmly.

"But how did you eat your dinner so quick?" she asked. "I couldn't. I shouldn't be any farther than pie."

And then the deacon asked if she had dined, and she confessed that she had not, and that she was very hungry.

"You must come down and eat with me," he said, but Flora anxiously inquired if there was anything left, and upon being assured that the dinner was almost untouched, for he had not got so far as pie, concluded to go down.

"How does my hair look?" she asked, using the deacon's face for a mirror. "Are my curls flying every vich vay?"

"No," said her friend, passing his hand tenderly over them, "they are in very good condition."

"But I have got my old boots on. Is it any consequence?"

"Not the least, my child."

"Sister said it was no matter about dressing up, but my hands are pretty clean I guess, and I have brought my good behavior."

"With that, you will always be well dressed," said her friend, patting the curly head.

All the wrinkles were finally smoothed out, and hand in hand they went down stairs, and Flora was presented to Mrs. Brown, who looked somewhat surprised at the unexpected addition to their number. A place at the table was made ready, and she did ample justice to the food put before her, for she was very hungry. It was long past her usual dinner time, though she did not know it. She had been absent from home upwards of three hours. The deacon wondered what her errand could be, for it was the first time she had ever honored him with a visit. Their acquaintance was purely a church acquaintance. Occasionally he had met with her in his calls about the parish, but on Sunday they always walked out of church together. Flora's dinner demanded all her attention. She forgot that she was committee on the rooster, and that she was expected to make a report, and she forgot that she had come to

Deacon Brown for information; she only knew that she was sitting down to a nice dinner, and that it tasted good. She was helped to both pudding and pastry, and wanted to pass her plate for a second piece of pie, but did not, and could have despatched another tart if it had been pressed upon her.

Long exposure to the mid-day sun, combined with the rich food she had eaten, made the little pet so drowsy, that when her friend after dinner, took her upon his knee for a social chat, he felt the curly head grow heavy on his arm, and in a few minutes Flora was fast asleep. He tenderly transferred her from his knee to a lounge in the dark parlor, and sat by her side, lest she might feel bewildered on awaking to find herself in a strange place.

The nap was a long one, for Flora was weary. Her tiny feet were not accustomed to travelling, and Deacon Brown, not knowing that the visit

was an impromptu one, and that there were anxious hearts at home, allowed her to sleep on.

When she first awoke, she could not tell how it happened that she went to sleep in the deacon's parlor, but the remembrance of her good dinner soon returned, and there was her friend reading by her side.

"I should like to live here always," she said, abruptly.

"Should you?"

"It is a very nice parlor, and you have good things to eat."

"It would be very pleasant to see a little girl like you running about."

"Would it!"

"It would, — very."

"Then why don't you buy one?"

"I will buy you, if you are for sale."

"They don't sell children, only buy them, and I can't come."

"I am sorry for that."

"I can't. My pa couldn't spare me, and Amy couldn't; but I will come to eat dinner with you again next week."

Flora was about to say she must be going, when the brilliant coloring of a picture caught her eye, and from the picture she went to a donkey with a receptacle for matches strapped upon his back, which she wanted very much; but she considerately refrained from expressing her wish. So many curious sights followed the donkey that she did not say "I must be going," until it was time for the deacon to say it, for he could not longer entertain his little friend; and then she bade him good-by, promising to accept his invitation to call again and look at the pretty things as much as she wished. She turned the corner and trotted up the cross street, well satisfied with her visit, her dinner, and her recep-

tion, regretting, however, the absence of the blue sash and tea-colored boots. She was walking along in a very happy mood, when somebody caught her in his arms.

CHAPTER XI.

BERTIE MAKES A PROPOSITION.

ITHOUT waiting to find out who it was that held her in his arms, she cried as loudly as she could "Ou! Ou!" and kicked, and struggled, and fought, so that she could not hear the voice that attempted to soothe her. Her hat flew off in the struggle, and it was some moments before she became calm enough to look up and see that it was Charley. Even then, her black eyes snapped, and she struck at him angrily.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she exclaimed.

"If you haven't taken the very words out of my mouth," said Charley. "Whew! what a little vixen you are!"

"You ought to do better than to scratch hold of a young lady that way."

"Young ladies don't have tantrums in the street."

"They do too!"

"Didn't you know me?"

"No, I thought I was took up."

"Well, you ought to be 'took up' for running away. Where have you been?"

"I didn't runned away," answered Flora, indignantly; "I walked."

"But everybody is scared to death about you."

"What for?"

"You have been gone all day. It is lucky I came across you, for the men have got the hooks all ready to drag the river. If you had

stayed away a little longer, they would have been at work hooking you up out of the water, and tearing great junks of flesh out of you."

"I haven't been in the river," said Flora.

Charley looked as though he doubted it.

"I haven't, Charley, truly, you may just ask Deacon Brown."

"Oh, that is where you have been?"

"Yes. To dinner. We had chicken and tarts, and such a pretty donkey with matches on his back!"

"Donkeys and matches for dinner!"

"No. In the parlor, and—"

"Flora Lee, what will your ma say?"

"Nothing, I guess."

"How happened you to go there to dinner?"

"I was hungry and I walked down that way, and he asked me to stop."

"Amy told you not to go."

"I did."

"That was naughty. We shall have to put you in the pot and boil you with the Calico Rooster."

"There!" Flora stopped short. "I must go back."

"No, you don't!" Charley grasped her arm quickly. "You don't run away again till I deliver you over to headquarters."

"I must."

"What for?"

"I forgot something."

"What?"

"Something. Let me go."

"I cannot let you go."

Flora pulled away from Charley and came near having another tantrum, but just as the spasm was coming on he threatened to call a doctor, and that frightened it away. She wanted to go back and tell the deacon the story of the Calico. She felt quite foolish to think

that during her long visit, she never mentioned him, but she would not have Charley know it for the world, for Charley would laugh at her. He would not allow her to go back, so she must try to remember to 'pologize next Sunday. The deacon would be so sorry that they could not find the Calico. They had got almost home when they met Amy and Bertie, who were rejoiced to see the little pet alive and well. They called her a darling, and almost smothered her with kisses. Bertie had looked down ever so many wells with fear and trembling, expecting to see her white face upturned to his, and Amy had been to half the houses in the village in quest of her; but she omitted to call at Deacon Brown's. Flora stayed away long enough to escape a scolding, for she had been the cause of great anxiety, and everybody was so thankful that the child had returned without so much as a scratch, that a scolding was not to be

thought of. She had to be carried to Grandma at once, and was quite a lion for the balance of the day.

"Bless its darling heart!" said Grandma. "Did it go a-visiting?"

"Yes," answered Flora, demurely. "It was a surprise party;" and she drew her little chair to Grandma's side, and gave a detailed account of her pleasant visit.

It was a surprise party in one sense of the word, but one that would not bear repeating; and Grandma advised her to consult Amy or her mamma, whenever she again thought of making a call.

Another day went by and no Calico appeared. Bertie said that he considered it almost certain that the rooster had met with "fowl" play. It was a serious joke, and no one appreciated it. Charley replied that if he had, Jack Midnight was at the bottom of it.

"He has come the 'Fe fi fo fum' over him by this time," said Bertie, "you cannot find so much as a whisker."

"I don't believe that Jack would harm the rooster," said Amy.

"That is because you do not know the family," returned Charley. "Let a Midnight alone for deeds of darkness."

"But you settled with him."

"I know I did, and I settled with you; that load is off my mind."

"And you settled with me," added Bertie, "I made a quarter clear out of that operation. I think I will quit the hen business, partition off the wood-shed and hang out my shingle. Money Broker, *et cetera*."

"It is a general settlement all round," asserted Charley, "for I believe that Jack has settled with the Calico."

"It is a clear case of mysterious disappear-

ance," observed Bertie. "Why don't you advertise him?"

"Pooh!" said Charley.

"You will never get him without."

"What a ridiculous idea! Bert is as full of whims as —"

"An old maid?" suggested Bertie.

"Yes, just about. I never mean to spend another penny on that rooster. I have abandoned him to his fate."

"And will pay no debts of his contracting, &c., &c."

"No, I wont."

"I wouldn't be so positive."

"It is just like you, Bertie, to propose advertising him. Why, how much do you suppose it would cost?"

"Not much."

"It would cost two dollars at the very lowest."

"Paper and ink must be high in your parts. I have made an estimate. Sheet of paper, two cents; ink, zero; pen, borrowed. Total — two cents. That wouldn't break anybody."

"Oh!" said Charley.

"See?"

"You mean the poster sort of advertising?"

"Yes," said Bertie.

"I thought you wanted me to put him in the Journal."

"Oh, no. Tack him up to the big trees, and in every store in the village."

"I would," said Amy. "But who ever heard of posting a rooster?"

"That is nothing to do with it. Perhaps you are the first person that ever lost a rooster. Do as Bertie advises. His sensible head is not to be laughed at."

"It isn't any more sensible than yours or mine," retorted Charley. "I can see things

almost as quickly as he can, only he always will speak first."

"Its machinery runs rather easier, anyhow," persisted Amy.

"I use plenty of bear's oil," said Bertie, modestly, "and I guess some of it strikes in, and greases the wheels."

"It would not look very well," asserted Charley. "Calico Rooster lost. Everybody would laugh."

"I should not put it in that way," said Bertie, "I should call it bird."

"A hen is not a bird."

"Isn't it?"

"No."

"It has feathers."

"Everything that has feathers is not a bird."

"I don't know of but one thing that is not."

"What's that?"

"A feather bed."

Bertie, encouraged by Amy's praise, tried to say something particularly bright, and did not succeed very well.

"I say it is a bird," affirmed Amy. "A hen is a fowl isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, a fowl is a bird. 'Bird lost' is the way to put it. Everybody will stop to read that."

"Who shall we get to write it?"

"Write it yourself," said Bertie.

"I can't write large enough."

"Amy can."

"Father will copy it for us this evening, if we get it ready," said Amy. "We can have it down on the slate, and we can easily alter any part that does not suit us."

"All right," said Charley. "Now if Bertie will run over and get the paper we will begin."

"Two sheets or one?"

"Two." Charley felt in his pocket for pennies, but as usual the pennies were scattering. "I declare! I thought I had enough to jingle, but I find only one. Lend us the balance, will you, Bertie?"

"Just as I expected," said Bertie, taking the one penny that Charley held out to him.

"You don't mind making an advance, do you, old fellow?"

"No," said Bertie, "I have become used to it."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PATCH-WORK ADVERTISEMENT.

HE store was not far away, and Bertie soon returned with the paper. Charley had cleaned his slate, and written the heading — "Bird Lost."

"Now we will proceed to business," he said, and bending over his slate, after much painstaking and careful consideration, produced the following:

"Flew away from the house of the subscriber, a red, yellow and black rooster. Anybody finding the same —"

"I can't get any farther than 'anybody finding the same.'"

"That will not do," said Bertie.

"What is the reason it won't?"

"He didn't fly away from the house of the subscriber."

"I think we can get up something better than that," said Amy, "we must begin again."

"Let us make a patch-work advertisement," said Bertie.

"How is that?"

"Why, each one writes a notice, and then we pick out the best parts and piece them together."

"And make a stunner!" declared Charley. "We will do it."

"We must not sit where we can look at one another," said Amy. "We must have composed minds."

They were under the shadow of the big elm, and as the tree was large, they could easily ar-

range themselves on the circular bench, so as to be unseen by one another.

"We must not talk or breathe loud," said Charley, "for it might interrupt a train of thought."

"I shall sneeze," asserted Bertie, "and I give you all fair warning. I always do in prayer-time and at funerals."

"And that will set my brains a-whirling," mourned Charley, "and spoil the whole thing. The rooster will get so far off, that our advertisement will never catch him."

"I will do the best I can," said Bertie, "I don't feel like it now, but I know I shall. I will hold on to my nose if that will do any good."

"Put your finger on your upper lip, and press down," said Amy. "You could not sneeze then to save your life."

Bertie promised to use every precaution and

after much discussion, positions were chosen, and they settled down to the work."

"Holloa!" exclaimed Bertie.

"Sneeze away, old fellow, and free your mind."

"It isn't that, it is the reward."

"What reward?"

"How much are you going to offer?"

"Not a red."

"Then we may as well stop before we begin. You must hold out a bait, if you expect the fish to bite."

"I don't intend to spend another dollar on him."

"Then advertising is gone up."

Bertie laid his slate and pencil on the bench.

"The consciousness of having done a virtuous act ought to be sufficient reward," said Amy.

"That's so," echoed Charley, earnestly.

"That's all bosh?" said Bertie, coolly. "If you advertise anything, you must be willing to pay more than it is worth, if you expect to get it back again."

"I don't know what to do," murmured Charley, reflectively; "I cannot bear to let the Calico slide, and I don't want to give up the advertisement."

"I never would give up the advertisement," protested Amy, "I would offer the reward first."

"How much would you offer?"

"A dollar?"

"Yes," said Bertie, answering Amy's look of inquiry, "I think a dollar would be about right."

"A dollar! Whew!" exclaimed Charley. "I am completely strapped now — dead broke."

"A dollar may bring back the rooster,

nothing less will," said Bertie, decidedly. "And as your funds are so very low, suppose we pass round the hat?"

Amy agreed to the proposal, and deposited half a dollar in Bertie's hat. He then made up the amount required, and passed it over to Charley.

"You overpower me," said Charley, taking the hat and the money.

"Don't say anything about it," returned Amy, "you have been unfortunate, and we are willing to help you, now that you view the rooster in the right light. So long as you acted so foolishly about him, we did not care how much trouble he gave you, but now we ought to make a family concern of it; Bertie and I came to that conclusion this morning."

"Yes," said Bertie, "and if the reward is decided upon, hadn't we better go on with the notice?"

"Well," sighed Charley, resignedly — but, brightening as an idea struck him — "perhaps some honest man finds the missing property, and refuses to take the reward. What then? We press him to accept it. He still refuses. I get my rooster back again, you pocket your money, and we are all hunkey dory! Now don't speak to me, anybody, I am going to begin."

Charley bent over his slate, Amy and Bertie resumed their seats, and followed his example, and for the space of half an hour, the pencils moved briskly. Each notice was written and wiped out many times. Amy's was the first one finished, Charley's the last, and after much discussion, the best parts were selected and joined together, and the patchwork advertisement was complete.

"There!" said Charley, flourishing the

slate, "you have the united talent of two branches of a family, noted for — for — "

"There she blows!" interposed Bertie.

"Do stop, and let Amy read it out."

ONE DOLLAR REWARD!

Bird Lost!

A red, yellow, and black bird, with bright feathers all over him, especially in his tail, which is long and graceful when he upholds it. This bird is a rooster, and answers to the name of Calico. He is supposed to have strayed away or been enticed from his home by some evil disposed person as he had been very low-spirited for several days. He is very much hen-pecked, also quite skittish, owing to his being chased, mostly. Any one returning him to his sorrowing friends, will receive the above reward, and the thanks of the bereaved owner.

CHARLEY WATERS.

P. S. He may be left at the Bank or at the residence of the aforesaid bereaved owner.

C. WATERS, ESQ.

"There!" said Charley, when Amy had finished, "I call that a stunning notice! It is easy enough to pick out *my* part. If we could but copy it ourselves we might have it up before night."

They all agreed that it was a stunning notice, and Amy thought with practice she might write large enough to copy it.

"I wish you would try," urged Charley. "I don't want father to know anything about it till it is up."

Amy concluded to try, and she succeeded so well, that by nightfall the patch-work advertisement was posted in every conspicuous place in the village.

The next morning Charley went the rounds

to make sure that it was still in position, and to experience the pleasure of seeing other people interested in his composition, for he looked upon it as exclusively his. His small contribution demanded all his attention. He singled out his one square of patch-work, and his vision so magnified it, that beside it, Amy's and Bertie's were of very little consequence. He wondered if the great public recognized him as the C. Waters, Esq., mentioned in the advertisement, and what they thought about it; and suddenly, he was seized with an impulse to hasten home, for somebody might have restored the rooster in his absence, and he half a mile away with the reward in his pocket!

But no such good fortune befell him. The notice had not brought him a ray of intelligence, but Amy and Bertie, who could not summon courage to gaze upon it in the broad light of day — at least not yet — desired to know all

the particulars concerning it. Could it be plainly read? Was there much of a crowd? Did anybody ask any questions?

Charley could not say there was much of a crowd, inasmuch as he observed but two persons looking at it; but then it was posted in eight different places, and there might have been a crowd at some one of those places for aught he knew. You could read it, but if it had been written a trifle larger, and if Amy had borne on a little harder, it would have been easier. Not a question was asked that he could remember.

The patch-work advertisement, you see, was a matter of great consequence to the Little Pitchers. They would not have understood how any one could fail to be interested in it. That it could provoke a smile, they never dreamed, so it was fortunate for them that they avoided the notice.

In one bosom however, it created a tumult. Jack Midnight, sauntering down the road at an early hour, encountered the patch-work advertisement. He walked straight up to it boldly, with hands thrust into his pockets, and with an air that said, — "You can't look me out of countenance with your white face!" He was whistling when he began to read, but the whistle gradually became very faint, and died out altogether before he got to the signature, C. Waters, Esq. The white face did look him out of countenance, for slowly he turned upon his naked heel, and with downcast eyes, walked on.

CHAPTER XIII.

PLANCHETTE DOES THE HONORABLE THING.

O use Jack Midnight's own words, the notice had knocked him all of a heap. He had his private reasons for wishing that it had been put up a few hours earlier, or that it had not been put up at all. As he walked along, the white placard — seemingly the same — stared him in the face from every post, and nowhere in the village could he escape it. It was not an accusing hand that was raised against Jack — whose conscience was not very tender — but the finger of ridicule and triumph that pointed towards him whichever way he turned. For it had been

in Jack's power to claim the reward; it was completely out of it now. He considered himself poorer by one dollar than he might have been, and all because of a little haste; and as he loved money far better than he did anything else in this world, even the honesty he talked so much about, his reflections as he plodded along that morning, were not the pleasantest that could be imagined. There was something in an out-of-the-way corner at home, that haunted him.

While Jack loitered along the road, Charley and his companions impatiently waited for tidings, but to their great disappointment, no tidings came. By noon, Charley was satisfied that everybody in town had read his advertisement and knew that he had lost his rooster; yet no one had volunteered any information. There was a grain of consolation in the thought that nobody had claimed the reward, but he had

counted largely upon the success of the advertisement.

"I am more convinced than ever," he said, "that Jack Midnight is at the bottom of it, but why the reward does not draw him out, is more than I can understand."

"I tell you he has come the 'Fe fi fo fum' over him," said Bertie, "just as I told you before. Dead roosters tell no tales."

"He never would do that," said Amy, "after taking Charley's money."

"If he has, he will be precious sorry,' affirmed Charley, "for he has lost one of his honest dollars. I wish there would come along an earthquake and shake him out of the village."

"Poor Jack!" sighed Amy, feelingly. "What a misfortune it is to get a bad name! You have to bear the weight of your own crimes, and be charged with those belonging to other people. I hope his back is broad."

"Now, you blow for Jack Midnight!" exclaimed Charley. "If it doesn't take a girl to be on the wrong side of the fence always! If you want her to make a fool of herself, just abuse the worst villain in the town, and you can see her do it. She will turn round and take his part every time. I believe if the Calico's head was on the block this minute, she would come the Pocahontas dodge, and say the pot should be cheated of its prey. I am glad *I* am not a girl."

"So am I," rejoined Amy. "You make a very nice boy, only you will flare up, and sometimes you talk pretty big; but boys cannot help that. I am glad I am not a boy."

"It is a blessed thing to be easily suited," declared Bertie, "but what are we to do with the rooster? Let him slide?"

"Never!" exclaimed Charley. "I intend to bring him home to Jack Midnight."

"You need not trouble yourself, for if your surmises are correct, he has done that for himself already."

"I mean, I shall accuse Jack of stealing him."

"Without a shade of proof? What do you expect to gain by that? You cannot do the first thing, as I can see."

"We might consult Planchette?" said Amy.

"Fiddle! She does not tell the truth."

"She does sometimes, Charley."

"She told fibs about me, and I am out with her. I shall never speak to the humbug again. She knew I would pay, but she said I wouldn't, out of spite."

"We can ask where the rooster is; it will do no harm to ask."

"Go ahead, then. If she says Jack stole him, I will believe her, and take her back into my confidence."

"Whether he did or not?"

"He did. I will get the board; but, mind you, I shall not ask a single question."

Charley brought the board, and Amy had a little confidential chat with Planchette before proceeding to business. She informed her that Charley had lost faith in her statements, and begged her, as she valued her reputation, to speak the truth under all circumstances. Planchette listened respectfully, and did not venture a remark till Amy asked, in a whisper,

"Will you give me your word of honor?" and then she answered readily, "Yes."

"Planchette is on her honor," said Amy, aloud, "you may depend upon what she says. Where shall we seek the missing rooster, Planchette?"

Even Charley waited eagerly for the answer.

"Under the table."

"Under the table!" echoed Charley. "What nonsense!"

"You shall not exasperate her," said Amy, "she is under my protection. She is going to tell us all she knows about it, aren't you, Planchette?"

"Under the table," wrote Planchette.

"Just about as much sense as a parrot," muttered Charley, but not loud enough for Planchette to hear.

"Was the rooster stolen?" queried Amy.

"Yes."

Charley drew near, and asked, impulsively, "By whom?"

"J. W.," said Bertie, reading the sprawling letters.

"No," said Charley, "'J. M.,' Jack Midnight, I knew it!" He brought his hand down upon the table with such force, that it sent a shock through the delicate frame of Planchette.

"You may speak right out," said Bertie. "Don't stop to mince matters. You will not get smashed by any body in this crowd, for we are all friends. If it was Jack Midnight, just say the word."

But Planchette had nothing more to say. Even when Amy put the question, she did not reply. She never before refused to answer Amy. Whether she considered herself roughly treated, or whether Charley's boisterous demonstration disturbed her mental balance, Amy not could tell; but certain it was, that Planchette was dumb.

"Put her under the table," suggested Bertie; "try that."

But it was of no use; she was speechless under the table and upon it, and all the information they had obtained was, that J. M. stole the rooster, and they must seek him under the table.

"Now," said Bertie, "we are in a pretty box. If Charley had kept still, as he promised to do, Planchette would have told us everything."

Planchette had told them all that was necessary. If they could but have interpreted her language aright, it would have led them to the missing rooster. She did the honorable thing. She gave the clew to his whereabouts, and would probably have been more explicit if Charley had not jarred her sensitive organization. As it was they had to give her up. I am sorry to say that Charley was not grateful for small favors; he wanted to smash Planchette.

Flora went over to Grandma's to report "no progress." Just as Planchette was discarded, she returned with the information that Grandma "couldn't do nothing."

They sent to her in the hope that she might

suggest some plan of action, but after the advertisement failed she gave up the Calico. To please Flora, Amy told her what Planchette had said, and she immediately made a practical application of the advice, by bumping her head under every table in the house; nor was she satisfied till she had inspected all the available tables in the neighborhood.

"Just look at that child!" exclaimed Amy. "Did anybody ever see such a lumpy forehead! It will be as black as her eyes by night if we do not bring out the brown paper."

"I will," said Flora.

"Stop, dear, you don't know where it is."

"I do."

Flora soon returned with a roll of the right kind, Amy thought, until she opened it, and saw the monstrous fly with which it was ornamented.

"Horror!" she exclaimed; "it is fly paper, Flora, you must not touch it."

"I aint a fly," rejoined Flora, indignantly. "It won't hurt me."

It required a long argument to convince her that some other paper would do as well, for Flora had taken a fancy to the picture.

CHAPTER XIV.

JACK MIDNIGHT'S VISITORS.

CHARLEY resolved to make a last, desperate effort in behalf of his rooster. For his sake, he would go once more to the house of the Midnights.

"Let us go in a body," suggested Bertie, "while you are exercising your tongue, we will be using our eyes."

The suggestion pleased Charley, who dreaded another meeting with Jack, for he felt that it would be a stormy one. When they were ready to start, Flora signified her intention of being of the party.

"You are not going!" exclaimed Bertie.

"I am."

"It will never do for the child to go," said Amy, "her forehead is plastered with wet paper. "Flora, dear, you must stay at home and wait for the rooster to come. Jack Midnight is not a nice boy."

"I don't care," pouted Flora.

"And sister will be back soon."

The baby pitcher began to grow very red in the face; she stamped her foot, and was on the verge of a tantrum, when Charley cried,

"Don't stop to bother! It can't do any hurt to pull off the brown paper and bring her along."

For the second time the baby pitcher felt grateful to Charley. He had given her the peacock's feathers, and now he was willing that she should go, so she held fast to his hand, determined not to be separated from him.

"Why do you want to go?" he asked. "It

is a long walk, and a rough road for small feet to travel on."

"I want to look under the table," she answered, and Charley laughed outright.

"Not a bad idea!" said Bertie. "I hope she will. Who knows but that was what Planchette meant?"

And they charged the little pet to look under the table, if she could get a chance.

"I will," said Flora, delighted at having a part assigned her. "What are you going to do, Charley?"

"Oh, I am going to be cross, and scowl like this," — he showed a very terrible face to Flora —"and make Jack Midnight tremble in his boots."

"He doesn't wear any," said Flora; "he always goes barefoot."

"But he ought to wear them," insisted Charley, gravely.

"Yes," admitted Flora.

"And I shall make him tremble in the boots he ought to wear."

They all grew very silent as they approached the house. They had undertaken a disagreeable task. Charley experienced a slight foretaste of the torture he intended to inflict upon Jack. He trembled in his boots. But he would not have admitted it if he could have reclaimed his Calico Rooster by the confession.

"Are you chilly?" queried Flora, innocently, for the hand that held hers was shaking.

"No," replied Charley, with a shiver, "I think it gets warmer and warmer."

The pig was grunting and rooting before the house, and the chickens were sunning themselves upon the railing and steps; but the door was shut and Jack nowhere to be seen.

"Would you knock?" inquired Amy, in a whisper.

"We generally do knock when we want to get in anywhere," said Bertie.

"But this is different," replied Charley. "The door is always open."

Bertie walked up and knocked stoutly. He succeeded in scattering the chickens, but apparently made no further impression. After waiting long enough to be satisfied that the rap was unheeded, if not unheard, he repeated it.

"I shall not give it up now," said Charley, "if I have to wait here a week."

"Hush!" said Amy, "he is coming."

They could hear the rusty bolt creaking in its staple, the door was cautiously opened, and Jack's head appeared.

"Good morning," said Amy, who felt instinctively that she must speak first.

"Rather late in the day for that," returned Jack. "My mornings is generally up when I eats my dinner, I finishes of 'em off together."

"We have come to make an inquiry," said Amy.

"And fetched a pretty gang along! Do you expect to take the house by storm?"

"We should like to have a little conversation with you," returned Amy, mildly. "Will you come out, or shall we walk in?"

Flora stepped up and began to push by Jack. "I am tired and want to sit down," she said; and while Jack was hesitating, the entire party walked in.

"It is very warm standing in the sun," observed Amy, apologetically.

"You are here about that dunghill," said Jack, bluntly.

"Yes," replied Charley. "Have you seen him?"

"He was in my beet batch yesterday or day before, and I tried to catch him. I wish I had,

for the papers stuck up round say you would pay a dollar to get him back again."

"I would, willingly."

"Don't I wish I could put my finger on him! Would you pay the money for him dead, now?"

"Yes," said Charley.

"If you had stuck that up before, I might have waylaid him."

"It is not too late now," remarked Bert.

"Aint it? I want to know! You are a smart one for a youngster, you are!"

There was a large table in the room with leaves that shut down almost to the floor. You could not look under it from the side. One end was placed against the wall — for it stood in an angle — and Jack's legs dangled from the other end. Jack was seated upon the table. Flora's eyes were riveted upon it. She had not forgotten her instructions, but to look under it seemed an impossibility.

"That young jade keeps mighty quiet," observed Jack. "What are you dreaming about, sis?"

"I want to look under your table," said Flora, coolly.

Oh, what a rage Jack Midnight was in! Flora's tantrums were as nothing to it.

"Look under my table will you?"

"I will," said Flora.

"Do you see that?"

He doubled up his fist and would have held it dangerously near the nose of the baby pitcher, if he had dared to leave his seat. He had good reasons for maintaining his position. He kicked against the leaves of the table and thrashed about, until Charley feared he was really going to have a fit, but Flora who had never seen anything of the kind was struck with astonishment.

"If you dare to look under my table I will kick your brains out, do you hear?"

"I do," said Flora, not at all frightened by the threat, for Bertie was there and Charley; no harm could come to her while they were near to protect her. Flora was perverse, and she was more determined than ever to take just one peep, so she watched for an opportunity. Bertie's eyes, meanwhile, had not been idle, and they now descried a downy feather upon the floor. He stooped to pick it up, when another and yet another caught his eye. They were very near the color of the painted floor, and were not discernible from an upright position. They were bright, yellow feathers, and Bertie recognized them at once as belonging to the neck frill of the Calico Rooster.

"What do you call those?" he demanded of Jack, shortly.

"Quills of course. Any fool might see that them is quills. You are a precious green one, you are!"

"Why!" exclaimed Charley. "Those feathers came out of my rooster!"

"To be sure they did. He left 'em in my beet batch. He is always leaving of 'em round. Have you any objections?"

Charley's blood was up. "I believe that you are a dishonest thief," he exclaimed hotly, "and that you have meanly made away with my rooster. I have tracked him here, and here I shall leave him."

There was more truth than poetry in Charley's words. With a dignified air he turned towards the door, followed by Amy and Bertie. Flora, unobserved, hung back.

"It is a shame," whined Jack, "for the likes of you to come down on a poor body with but his good name to back him. I can bear to be called a thief, but a dishonest thief, white or black never called me before."

Jack was too glad to get rid of his trouble-

some visitors to venture into any discussion that would prolong their stay, so he put on his whining tone and injured manner, and — not seeing Flora who lingered behind — jumped from his seat to open the door and show them out.

CHAPTER XV.

FLORA LOOKS UNDER THE TABLE.

HEN Jack jumped off the table, Flora improved the opportunity to look under it. What she saw there, almost took away her breath, and quite broke her heart. She was crying piteously when Bertie noticed her loitering so far behind that he went to meet her.

"Why, what is the matter with the pet?" he said. "Did she think we were running away?"

"The Calico Rooster," she sobbed convulsively.

"She is disappointed because we did not find him," said Amy. "Never mind the Calico

Rooster, dear. The Black Spanish is a great deal better, for he never runs away."

But at the sound of Amy's voice, Flora cried the harder. Amy, evidently, had not said the right thing.

"Come here pet," called Charley, holding out his arms. Charley was in high favor for once, so the baby pitcher hid her face upon his jacket. "Now what is it?"

"The Calico Rooster —"

"Yes," said Charley, soothingly.

"Under the table —"

"Well."

"With his clothes all cut off!" sobbed Flora, convulsively.

"No!"

"Head too!" wailed Flora.

"Did you look?"

Flora could not speak but she nodded, — yes.

"Did the little pet look?" demanded Bertie, eagerly.

Yes, the little pet looked; and she saw the pretty feathers that were never to be hers, lying in a disorderly heap beside the dead rooster.

"I knew it," said Charley. "I hope Planchette will forgive me for doubting her. I suppose we might turn round and make a great fuss about it."

"But the rooster is dead," said Bertie, "you are sure that he is dead?"

"He hadn't any clothes on," said Flora, "nor any head; and he was barefooted. I could see his drum-sticks."

"Oh, well, that settles it. If you could see his drum-sticks and he didn't have any head on, I wouldn't give much for his running gear. Any certainty is better than an uncertainty, and we have got a dead sure thing on the rooster."

"Yes," returned Charley. "Thanks to

Flora; and you would have left her at home. Never mind darling, if you have lost the Calico's bright coat. Charley will buy you a heap of pretty feathers because you were a good girl to look under the table."

"Blue ones too?" queried Flora, wiping away her tears.

"Yes, dear, blue ones too. And we don't care for the Calico Rooster any more, do we pet?"

"No," said Flora, and they all said "no." Everybody was willing to give up the Calico.

"You may get the prince's feather and the Johnny-jump-ups," said Amy, "I am going to make a new garden."

"And we may as well bring the business to a period," added Charley, taking out his pocket book. "This reward has weighed heavily on my mind. Take your money."

"It is not mine," said Amy.

"Nor mine," said Bertie. "It belongs to Flora."

"Why, so it does!" exclaimed Charley. "Flora found the rooster."

And to Flora the reward was given.

When the unwelcome visitors had departed, Jack closed and bolted the door. Then he went to the table and drew from underneath it, Charley's rooster, alas! Calico no longer. He was engaged in robbing it of its bright feathers when he was so unpleasantly interrupted. He threw the poor limp bird upon the floor, and viewed it with an air of reproach.

"You're a pretty crower, you are, to cheat a fellow out of an honest penny! How do you suppose a body is to thrive, if you go on in that way? If you had minded your own concerns, and kept out of my beet batch a day longer, I should have made a dollar, and that

is more than your tough old carcass is worth. I could have done it, if you had kept your quills on, but you was mighty anxious to part with 'em. I could have done the business for you just as well a week hence."

Hearing a noise Jack left the rooster, and carefully inspected the premises.

"I believe they are watching of me," he murmured, "for they suspicion that I have got the dunghill. That little one is a sharper, a picking up quills, and flinging of 'em at me! Wasn't there ever a chicken with yellow quills on him before? And that young one a wanting to look under my table! Somebody told her to do it. Did they see me chuck him under? Of course not! How could they? Jack, don't be a fool, but go ahead and finish the job you started on. How shall I do it? I can't sell the old hulk in this town, them posters is before

me; and I can't eat him, they would come and catch me at it."

Jack moodily tried to find a way out of his difficulties, but the rooster was a dead weight on his hands. He dared not offer it for sale, and he dared not eat it. His sole idea was how to dispose of it. He could manage the fowl, but what should he do with the feathers? Never did bird have so many feathers before! And each particular one was a witness against him. It would not do to have them blowing about, he must put them where they could tell no tales. So Jack built a fire, and in much smoke and tribulation, burned every one of Flora's pretty feathers; and at dead of night, he took his spade, and buried all that was left of Charley's Calico Rooster.

THE END.